



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**  
Shepard Building  
255 Westminster Street  
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-3400

Deborah A. Gist  
Commissioner

September 2, 2009

**To:** Superintendents

**From:** Deborah A. Gist, Commissioner of Education  
David R. Gifford, MD, MPH, Director of Health

**Re: CRITICAL DAILY ABSENTEE REPORTING**

As you know, the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE) continues to work closely with the Rhode Island Department of Health (HEALTH) to address the spread of the H1N1 (Swine Flu) virus in Rhode Island. **Both HEALTH and RIDE strongly emphasize the importance of, and critical need for, daily absentee reporting by all RI schools which provides real-time, highly sensitive data on the level and presence of illness in our school-aged youth.**

According to the CDC, the primary means to reduce spread of influenza in schools is to focus on early identification of ill students and staff, staying home when ill and good cough and hand hygiene etiquette.

HEALTH will continue to use school daily absenteeism data for the epidemiologic surveillance of illness in schools. Absentee rates in schools are often the first indication that an outbreak could be occurring. **Therefore, all schools must continuously report daily absenteeism throughout the school year.**

**This makes daily attendance reporting critical. All schools must monitor and report absenteeism in real-time on a daily basis.**

The RIDE Office of Network and Information Systems, has worked with your IT offices to make sure that you are comfortable with the eRIDE absenteeism reporting system. For IT and electronic reporting questions, please contact the RIDE Helpdesk at [helpdesk@ride.ri.gov](mailto:helpdesk@ride.ri.gov) or 222-8968, for further instructions. **Please make it a priority to have these reports completed and to us by 2:00 p.m. each day.**

Last, school nurses and student health centers should report classroom clusters and increased traffic to their office from flu like illness to HEALTH at 401-222-2577.

Thank you again for your understanding and cooperation.

Telephone (401) 222-4600

Fax (401) 222-6178

TTY 800-745-5555

Voice 800-745-6575

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